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50 Back-to-School Tips for Teachers

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Finishing off a relaxing summer to gear up for the arrival of the next class of students can be stressful for many teachers. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, craft your game plan for success with our 50 back-to-school tips.

Establish a Clean Slate

1. If you haven't already, let go of last year. Whether it was a good or bad year, it's not this year.
2. Change up your classroom layout from last school year. Keeping things fresh helps to motivate you.
3. Organize desks, tables, and cabinets in a way that is conducive to learning. Think about what worked or didn't work in the past.
4. Invest in a new planner, tote bag, note cards, and other items that will help you start the year with a fresh perspective.

Set the Tone



Contacts



Tools



Resources



Full Site

5. Give your space personality as well as structure. Decorate your classroom in a way that reflects your
(<https://www.signupgenius.com/index.c>

personality and teaching style. You will feel most comfortable when you are in your element.

6. Give parents and students a good first impression by approaching the year with a well thought out and organized plan.
7. Prepare an outline of the first few weeks for parents. Post it on a blog, print it out for the open house, or send it in an email.
8. Decorate your door and a bulletin board (or two) within your classroom. Friendly and fun décor that is still focused on learning is key.
9. Put together the first month of lesson plans with lots of interactivity that will get all your students involved. Let them work together and get to know one another.
10. Learn the names of all of your students by the end of week one. This is a simple and important way to earn their respect.
11. Over-plan your lessons. You don't want your students to be left with 15 minutes of nothing to do.
12. Select great books to read during those first days that will grab your students' attention and get them excited about starting a new school year.
13. Build class spirit. Give your classroom a name and create a team environment within your classroom.

Parent Teacher Conferences Made Simple with a Sign Up! SAMPLE
(<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f054ba5ad28a6ff2-parent4>)



My Group Name

SIGN UP SHEET

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Date	Location	Item to Bring
11/19/2009 (Thu.)	Location 1	Drinks (2) Sign Up Snacks Sign Up
11/23/2009 (Mon.)	Location 2	Drinks (2) Sign Up Snacks Sign Up
11/30/2009 (Mon.)	Location 1	Drinks (2) Sign Up Snacks Sign Up
12/7/2009 (Mon.)	Location 3	Drinks (2) Sign Up Snacks Sign Up
12/19/2009 (Sat.)	Location 1	Drinks (2) Sign Up Snacks Sign Up

(<http://www.signupgenius.com/index.cfm?go=s.signup&id=6290655&themeoverride=318>)

Connect with Co-workers and Parents

- Collaborate with other teachers. Joining forces within your grade-level team will empower you.
- Build relationships. Get to know the office, media, lunchroom, and janitorial staff. There will be a time when you need their assistance.
- Get involved in a variety of school activities and staff functions. Be a known face around your school. Don't stay isolated.
- Find a colleague to whom you can turn for advice, share your triumphs, or simply unload about a classroom challenge.
- Build your parent community. Make contact with parents within the first week of school. Gaining parents' trust is paramount.
- Additionally, open the doors of communication with parents. Give your students' parents your preferred contact information. Encourage questions.

20. As you connect with others throughout the year, remember to keep an open mind and be willing to accept advice. It shows you are willing to grow Think Ahead & Organize
21. Create a checklist. Write down everything you need to have a successful first few weeks. Then, work your way down the list.
22. Take the time to understand the curriculum you will be teaching. Prioritize the standards that are essential and map them across the year.
23. Get your class blog, webpage, and/or wiki ready.
24. Make the first seating chart and label the desks. This initial seating chart could change quickly after the first few days of school, but you need a starting point.
25. Create or update your substitute folder to include a seating chart, discipline plan, class bell schedule, and emergency lessons or activities.
26. Keep good accounting records from the get-go. Establish a place for expense receipts that could be deductions come tax time.
27. Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try incorporating a new teaching strategy. Stay early so you are prepared.
28. Set goals and decide on benchmarks for what you want your students to achieve.
29. Keep the principal informed. If you are planning to do anything new or unusual, make certain to run it by the principal well in advance.
30. Start a communications log. Keep track of all emails, telephone calls, and meetings. A situation could arise where you need to show your efforts.
31. Consider the best plan for organizing parent help. Will you recruit volunteers and coordinate your wish list online? An online sign up service like SignUpGenius could be a lifesaver!

Organize your Class Wish List with SignUpGenius. SAMPLE
(<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f054ba5ad28a6ff2-mrs>)



- 32. Don't find yourself and your students twiddling your thumbs. Your classroom control will go out the window, fast. Keep educational games on hand for a moment's downtime. Even "plan B" is still a plan!
- 33. Don't shortchange your own growth. Set goals for you to improve on specific areas of weakness.



**Create a
Parent Teacher
Conference
Sign Up!**

View Infographic


(<http://www.signupgenius.com/school/parent-teacher-conference-info.cfm>)

Create Student-Focused Relationships

- 34. Build first day activities that help students learn about each other and you. Activities that move students around will make them comfortable in classroom.
- 35. Don't forget to smile. A smile is a powerful way to give students exactly what they need.

36. Write a "Welcome To My Class" letter to students. Share some interesting facts about you.
37. Collaboration is your friend, so start this on day one. Get your students involved with setting classroom best practices or rules. When kids are a part of this important task, it becomes personal and gives them incentive to meet these goals.
38. Once class rules have been finalized, post them in a place where all students can see them and you can refer to them as needed.
39. Focus on the positive actions of your students. Give lots of praise when transitions and procedures are done well.
40. Show respect to your students by giving it and expecting it to be returned. Then do it again and again.
41. Establish a personal relationship with every student. Ask your students about themselves. Prove you care about their wellbeing.
42. Give positive discipline. When students are corrected with love and patience, it encourages them to be their best.
43. Encourage them to reach out if they need help in any way. Students need to be their own best advocates.
44. This one is important! Give yourself regular pep talks about having lots of patience and a sense of humor.

Planning a Class Party? We can help! SAMPLE (<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0a48aba623a20-holiday>)



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(<http://www.signupgenius.com/index.cfm?go=s.signup&id=6290655&themeoverride=297>)

Relax

45. Spend your workdays planning, not panicking, for the next big thing. A well-thought plan should include built-in down time.
46. Throw in some laughter. Have a joke or riddle of the day. You're more relaxed just thinking about it, right?
47. Breathe. The beginning of school can be very hectic. A couple of deep breaths will help you decompress. Remember, students are nervous too.
48. Get yourself ready mentally and physically. Exercise, eat well, and rest. Then, keep it going throughout the school year.
49. Schedule a massage after the first week of school. Enough said on this one!
50. Remain flexible. Things happen and even the best made plans will be affected.

Building our youth is not always easy. Be dedicated to this amazing profession that influences and shapes our future leaders by aiming to make each new school year the best yet!

Sara Kendall is a freelance writer and mom of two daughters.
